

# A Story of Compassion

## USDA Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

### Transformation Preschool

St. Louis, Missouri

Rachell Morris is a member of the Transformation Christian Church congregation and is a full-time nursing student at Applied Technology in St. Louis. She and her husband have three children, sons Jodie and Carlos, and a daughter Jouri, who have all attended the childcare center for the past four years. Carlos is a preschooler and he is learning the scriptures and to recognize colors, to count, write his name and tell his Mom about the Food Guide Pyramid and good nutrition.

The older children attend the center during summer when school is out. Rachell says she is thankful for the school because it helps her care for her children while her husband is working and she attends school. It provides an excellent academic base, solid spiritual foundation and well-balanced meals for her kids, she says appreciatively.

She has noted a positive change in her children's eating habits thanks to nutrition lessons and the center's emphasis on healthy food choices for kids. Her kids no longer eat white bread or pork and gradually replacing the white rice they once ate exclusively for brown rice.

### How the Initiative is Helping

The Center first participated in the Summer Food Service Program and was unaware that a food program for child care centers existed. However, in 2003, soon after Cortaiga became director of the center, she received some outreach

materials about the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). These materials were part of the ongoing campaign efforts by the Mountain Plains Region, and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, to reach potential new partners by helping faith-based and community organizations become aware of opportunities to participate with FNS nutrition assistance programs. Bulk mailings, email messages, site visits, regular conference calls and meetings with state and local staff are all a part of the efforts to support and bring attention to the Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

Prior to joining CACFP in June 2003, the center was paying the entire cost of meal and snack service. This meant the center had a very tight budget due to food costs and the fact that tuition was kept to a minimum because parents of kids at the center had limited resources. Cortaiga says obtaining the meal and snack reimbursement was a boon to the center and has helped keep costs down and tuition increases less frequent.

### About the Organization

Transformation Preschool is a Christian-based child care facility that focuses on spiritual training for every child and also emphasizes the development of preschool skills. Their mission is to root children in a strong foundation for a fruitful future, spiritually, academically, emotionally and physically. The center's academic program teaches children to learn the alphabet and phonics, how to count to 100, read, and to write cursive style. Children memorize 26 different scriptures and learn their prayers as well. The center



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is operated by the World Outreach Center and the pastors are Dr. Richard Burruss and his wife Pricellious, who also serve as executive directors of the center.

The Transformation Preschool is located in the church and currently is home during the day to 61 kids. Nine staff members conduct classes and care for the children up to 12 hours a day, from 6:30 to 6:30. If overnight care is needed, the center can provide that service, especially for firemen who often work long shifts. The center prepares an average of 140 meals daily, serving breakfast, lunch and snacks for kids. Transformation offers a carefully thought-out menu—they serve no pork, no processed meat products, and no deep-fried foods. This emphasis on healthy meals features oven-baked meats, 100 percent virgin olive oil and healthy snacks.

